

OPPOSE H.R. 782, OLDER AMERICANS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that today would be a day to celebrate. For 4 years, the Older Americans Act has languished in this House of Representatives. The authorization expired 4 years ago. We have been operating off of a continuing appropriations resolutions for 4 years.

Because of that, there has been no inflation adjustment in many crucial programs for our senior citizens. Because of that, there has been no review and addition to the Older Americans Act of new programs to serve the vital needs of our seniors.

I introduced bipartisan legislation the beginning of the session. We have more than half of the Members of this House of Representatives on that widely agreed-upon legislation.

But now, in rather a bit of a surprise move, the Republican leadership is popping out an Older Americans Act revision to the floor, H.R. 782, under suspension of the rules, no amendments allowed, that is extraordinarily controversial. Why is it controversial? Well, because in a pique, in a pique, the Republican leadership is very angry with one of the many senior groups which participates in the Older Americans Act employment programs, the National Council of Senior Citizens, who regularly advocate for progressive issues for seniors, for prescription drug coverage and other things. Yes, they ding the Republican leadership and the Republicans a bit.

So in a pique, to get at that one group that they hate, they are going to take and penalize all the other senior groups who actually do 90 percent of the senior employment and arbitrarily change the program.

What are the Republicans, the party of small government, the party of the private sector, the party of charitable nonprofit groups going to do? They are going to rip money away from a very successful program being operated now by dozens of other senior groups and give it to the States.

Well, one might say, what is wrong with that? Well, even in my own State, which is recognized as the leader on senior citizen issues, they are less efficient and less capable. They get fewer people placed for the same amount of money as the private nonprofit senior groups do. They get fewer people through this program. They serve a different clientele.

Actually, the States serve the easier-to-serve clientele, the urban clientele, the more educated clientele than do the disbursed groups like Green Thumb and others who go into rural areas

where the States do not have the capability of going.

This is extraordinarily unfortunate that this bill should come forward in this form. It is going to come forward under the suspension of the rules. No amendments allowed. We could have at least had a fair fight over this issue. Given the fact that more than half of the House has cosponsored my legislation, bipartisan legislation, I believe we would have prevailed.

But we will not be allowed to offer an amendment to this bill. There will be 40 minutes of debate. We have waited 4 years. Only the people who are running this House of Representatives after 4 years could deliver a turkey like this, a bill that is going to hurt senior citizens.

Instead of helping them when this should have been a day to celebrate for America's senior citizens, it will be a day that we will look back upon and say how is it now that the Older Americans Act senior employment programs were destroyed, they were destroyed because a few people in the majority were mad at one senior group that gets a tiny fraction of the money under this bill. So they dumped money into State bureaucracies that were incapable of doing the job. That is a sad day.

In addition to that, we find that the administration is very opposed to this. Perhaps they can even get this on to the veto list if they try hard enough. The Secretary of Labor has said that they find unacceptable the changes that were made to the Senior Community Service Employment program authorized under title 5 of the Older Americans Acts. We believe this change would significantly diminish the effectiveness of the Senior Community Service Employment programs.

So why? Why are they doing this? It is so sad. Again, just to repeat one last time that, because they are angry at one senior citizen group that has advocated against some of their priorities, their misplaced priorities here, they going to penalize all the senior citizen groups, including Green Thumb, which has got one of the most successful employment programs for hard-to-serve rural low-income seniors in this country and provides vital services in thousands of communities across America.

They are going to have millions of dollars ripped out of their budget and delivered to State bureaucracies that will not spend it as efficiently and perhaps will not be able to spend it at all.

I urge people to oppose this bill under the suspension of the rules.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

O gracious God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we are grateful that Your blessings are over us and Your everlasting arms are beneath us. We know, O God, that Your spirit gives us strength when we are weak, chastens us when we miss the mark, forgives us and makes us whole. We are thankful that we can begin a new week energized by Your faithfulness and comforted by Your many mercies. Bless all Your people, O God, and may Your peace that passes all human understanding be with each one of us now and evermore. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LAMPSON led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNIZING ANDRE AGASSI FIFTH GRAND SLAM TITLE AND GRAND SLAM FOR CHILDREN

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I come to the floor today to recognize and congratulate a tennis superstar and fellow Nevadan for capturing his fifth Grand Slam title and his second in 1999. It was merely 2 years ago when the sports writers claimed that Andre Agassi was over the hill in world tennis competition. However, after a superb summer which consisted of his winning the French Open title, a second-place finish at Wimbledon, and winning the U.S. Open title, Agassi recaptured the number one ranking and once again the top of the tennis world.

Mr. Speaker, Agassi's unparalleled performances do not end on the court.